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WAS *Paradise Lost* SUGGESTED BY  
THE MYSTERY PLAYS?

TO THE EDITORS OF MOD. LANG. NOTES.

SIRS: L. Toulmin Smith in her edition of the *York Plays* enumerates eleven plays extant on the Creation, Fall of Lucifer, Adam, Eve and the Garden of Eden, Man's Disobedience and Fall; and she mentions many others on the Nativity and Temptation.

Shakespeare refers to the over-drawn characters in the plays when he speaks of out-Heroding Herod, and Milton too in his extensive study of literature, must have become acquainted with them. If so, a sudden change in his mind can be accounted for. In 1639, he announced in his *Epitaphium Damonis* that he intended to write an epic on King Arthur and the Early Britains, but in 1641, he turned to Biblical subjects, and at the same time to the notion of dramatic form. He actually sketched some sixty dramas possible from the Old and New Testament, preferring the subject of *Paradise Lost*.

Aware doubtless of his lack of dramatic genius, he despaired of his plan for many years, because that inviting theme seemed inseparable from its impracticable form. Had Caedmon's epic suggested the *Paradise Lost* (as some affirm) his change from the first plan would have been only one of subject, and the dilemma would never have arisen.

To one somewhat favorable to this solution, it seems as if a play given by the Innholders still lingered in the poet's mind when he wrote the opening of Book Third. The two are given for comparison.

"Hail holy Light, offspring of Heav'n first-born,  
Or of th' Eternal co-eternal beam  
May I express thee unblam'd? since God is light,  
And never but in unapproach'd light  
Dwelt from eternity, dwelt then in thee,  
Before the Heavens thou wert, and at the voice  
Of God, as with a mantle didst invest  
The rising world of waters dark and deep,  
Won from the void and formless infinite."

"Hayl! fulgent Phebus and fader eternall!  
Parfite plasmator (creator) and god omnipotent  
Be whose will and power perpetuall  
All things hath influence and beyng verreyment.  
Graunte me thi grace, I thee beseke hertely,  
In woorde ne dede the never to offende,

Responcio Patris ad Filium.

O lampe of light! Olumen eternall  
O co-equal sonne! O verrey sapience."

HERBERT HARRIS.

Lewisburg, Pa.

BRIEF MENTION.

Few students of the Romance languages will need to have their attention called to the rare merits of the second series of Adolf Tobler's *Vermischte Beiträge zur französischen Grammatik* (Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzel, 1894, 8vo, pp. 250). To beginners in the historical study of French syntax—who are unlikely to find lectures offered on the subject either in the European or the American Universities—no course of reading at once more solid and more fascinating could be recommended than vol. iii of Diez' *Grammatik*, followed by the two volumes of Tobler's *Vermischte Beiträge*, gathered chiefly from contributions to the *Zeitschrift für rom. Phil.* This second collection is especially welcome, since in addition to the articles that have appeared in recent years in the *Zeitschrift*, it presents the author's contributions to the *Philologischen Abhandlungen*, Heinrich Schweizer-Sidler . . . gewidmet (Zurich, 1891), namely, "*Donc*," "*Des cent ans*" and "*Vom Gebrauche des Futurum Praeteriti*;" three articles that had not before appeared in print, of which the most important is on the "Adjectiv in Substantivfunktion" (the illustrations are drawn largely from Loti, Bourget, Zola and the current periodicals); and the treatise on *Verblümter Ausdruck und Wortspiel in alter Rede*, increased to nearly twice the size in which it originally appeared in 1882. Such is the unique importance of these contributions, taken collectively, that one who is unfamiliar with their results can scarcely be regarded as having even an adequate reading knowledge of Old French.

An Organisation entitled "The Central Modern Language Conference" has been formed for the Western States; Prof. W. H. Carruth (University of Kansas) is the President and Prof. H. Schmidt-Wartenberg (University of Chicago) is the Secretary of the new Society, regarding which a circular letter will appear in our next issue.